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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 TOKYO 000218

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: TWO IRANIAN OFFICIALS VISIT TOKYO

REF: TOKYO 47

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Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Michael Meserve for reasons
1.4(b) and (d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: Two Iranians officials, Senior Advisor to the President Mojtaba Samareh Hashemi and Foreign Ministry Spokesman and Special Advisor to the Minister Hassan Qashqavi, recently paid separate visits to Tokyo to push Tehran's views on the situation in Gaza and in the wider Middle East region. The Japanese were careful to assure that both left hearing the same message from all their interlocutors: that Gaza requires a lasting peace and that Iran must play a constructive role, not only with regard to Gaza but in the wider region as well. Qashqavi replied that Iran has a realistic view of the world, and it is the United States that needs to adjust its policies to reality. Samareh Hashemi delivered a personal letter from President Ahmedinejad to Prime Minister Aso, urging Japan to act responsibly and asserting that "the Zionists" must be punished for their crimes against Gaza or they will become aggressive again. END SUMMARY.

VISIT BY MOJTABA SAMAREH HASHEMI

12. (C) Mojtaba Samareh Hashemi, Senior Advisor to Iranian President Ahmedinejad, requested in early January to visit Japan in order to discuss the situation in Gaza, according to MOFA Second Middle East Division Principal Deputy Director Yukiya Hamamoto. The Japanese consented and the visit took place January 22-24. Samareh Hashemi had requested a meeting with the Prime Minister, which was not officially granted. However, the Japanese agreed he could meet with Chief Cabinet Secretary Takeo Kawamura January 22, and there was an understanding that Prime Minister Aso would "drop in" during the meeting. Samareh Hashemi also met separately on January 23 with Foreign Minister Nakasone, Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs Mitoji Yabunaka, and Deputy Vice Minister for Political Affairs Kenichiro Sasae. Hamamoto described the meetings as very business-like and hastened to add that, contrary to custom, no one from the government hosted a lunch or dinner for the Iranian visitor, although Parliament member Taro Nakayama, who is head of the Japan-Iran Interparliamentary Friendship League (and a member of the U.S.-Japan Interparliamentary Friendship Group), hosted him for a breakfast.

13. (C) Samareh Hashemi's main mission was to deliver a personal letter from President Ahmedinejad to Prime Minister Aso, according to Hamamoto. Although Hamamoto declined to provide a copy of the letter, he did read passages from it to Embassy Political Officer. The letter first recounted the many casualties and the destruction of society and industry in Iraq, the continued problems and opium production in Afghanistan despite the presence of U.S. forces, the worsening situation in Pakistan, and the thousands of casualties suffered in Lebanon during Israel's war on Hezbollah. It then focused on Gaza, stating that children, women, and unprotected civilians were the main casualties of Israel's assault; that Israel had destroyed homes and hospitals, and has caused untold humanitarian suffering; and that the U.N. Security Council had proven powerless to cope. The letter said that because "the Zionists" were never punished for what they did in Lebanon, they felt free to engage in aggressions against Gaza. If they are not punished for Gaza, their aggressive and violent actions will not be checked and will continue.

14. (C) During his meeting with PM Aso and CCS Kawamura, Samareh Hashemi faithfully repeated the points made in the letter, reported Hamamoto. He made no specific requests of Japan (for example, specific actions as a member of the Security Council) and instead seemed content to simply convey Iran's general point of view to the Japanese leadership. PM Aso responded by telling him that Iran needs to be realistic. With regard to Gaza, it is important for there to be a lasting peace, not simply another temporary truce. Aso emphasized that Iran must play a constructive role to help make this possible, noting that to the best of his knowledge, Hamas did not have the capability to produce its own weapons

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in the Gaza Strip.

15. (C) Hinting also that Iran owes it to the international community to play a more constructive role in regions closer to its own borders rather than in countries far away, PM Aso raised Afghanistan, where Iran has "issues of common concern" with other countries, such as border control and narcotics interdiction. Touching on the nuclear issue, Aso reminded Samareh Hashemi that Japan is very interested in this problem, has a long history of producing peaceful nuclear energy, and is cognizant of the fact that Iran still has many international obligations it must fulfill. Hamamoto noted that this was an allusion to both IAEA requirements and those set forth by a growing number of Security Council resolutions, Iran's failure to comply with having been a frequent topic of conversation in previous high-level bilateral meetings.

16. (C) Hamamoto said that Samareh Hashemi heard the same message, mainly that Iran needs to be realistic and play a constructive role in Gaza, when he met the next day with Foreign Minister Nakasone, VFM Yabunaka, and DVM Sasae. The Japanese intended, he said, to reiterate in no uncertain terms the message Nakasone had given Iranian Foreign Minister Mottaki when the two last spoke on the telephone January 7 (ref).

17. (U) In publicly aired remarks made during an NHK television interview, Samareh Hashemi urged the Obama Administration to acknowledge Iran's nuclear development program and review U.S. policy in the Middle East. He said that if the U.S. hopes to realize change, it must stop aiding Israel and withdrawal from Iraq. And once the U.S. respects Iran's nuclear rights, many issues will be resolved and U.S.-Iranian ties will be improved.

FOREIGN MINISTRY SPOKESMAN HASSAN QASHQAVI

¶8. (C) Hassan Qashqavi, Foreign Ministry Spokesman and Special Assistant to Foreign Minister Mottaki, visited Tokyo January 27-29, reported Hamamoto. The visit had been planned for several months, and was not directly related to Samareh Hashemi's, he said. While in Tokyo he met with his counterparts, MOFA Spokesperson Kazuo Kodama and Prime Minister's Spokesman Hiroshi Ogawa. He also met with reporters from Kyodo Press, granted an interview to NHK television, and addressed a public press conference at the National Press Club. The most senior official he met with was Parliamentary Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs Masahiko Shibayama.

¶9. (C) Hamamoto was only able to provide a very limited readout of Qashqavi's official discussions. The Iranian pressed Tehran's argument that it has a right under the NPT regime to pursue the peaceful use of nuclear energy. Shibayama told him Iran needs to take a more realistic view of the world, particularly following the inauguration of President Obama, and to take steps to become a more responsible and constructive member of the international community. Qashqavi replied that Iran does have a realistic view of the world, and it is the United States that must change its policies to reflect reality.

¶10. (U) Qashqavi made remarks at the National Press Club January 28, commenting on relations with Japan, President Obama, relations with Hezbollah and Hamas, Israel, and Iran's nuclear program.

-- Relations with Japan: Relations have existed for 80 years and are good. Japanese are disciplined, polite, and hardworking, and Iranian officials view their Japanese counterparts as cautious and adept at viewing issues in the long-term. Five Japanese media companies (NHK, Kyodo News, Asahi Shimbun, Yomiuri Shimbun, and Mainichi Shimbun) have bureaus in Tehran. What Iran expects from Japan as an ally of the U.S. is to help the U.S. and President Obama to accept a more realistic view of the world. The Middle East is going through a fundamental change and President Obama must be made to realize this.

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-- President Obama: Iran will closely watch President Obama's behavior and actions and see whether he can really make "change," and whether such change is superficial or real, and if the change includes America's policy in the Middle East. Iran has only heard about Obama's "change" through the media, and has not received any message directly from him. If President Obama's change is real and fundamental, Iran would like him to make an appropriate approach.

-- Relations with Hezbollah and Hamas: Both organizations are popularly supported and democratic. Lebanon currently has a stable government thanks to Hezbollah and Iran's constructive role. Hamas was elected by the people in 2005. "It is the United States and Mr. Obama who have to open their tight fists and face the reality in the Middle East; only after that can we have dialogues."

-- Israel: "Iran, like many other Arab countries, will not officially and internationally recognize the Zionist country. On the possibility that Israel might attack Iran, the international community will not allow such an act. Iran believes Israel does not have the capability to attack Iran, so we do not take the Zionists seriously."

-- Nuclear program: "Our country is following the path of Japan's path after the war of developing nuclear energy for peaceful use. There are three principles for our nuclear development: 1) Iran has the right to develop nuclear energy based on the NPT; 2) Iran abides by and respects all international treaties within the framework of the NPT; and 3) Iran will place all nuclear-related activities under the inspection of the IAEA." He claimed there is a double

standard under which countries such as Japan are allowed to pursue the peaceful use of nuclear power while Iran is not.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

¶11. (C) MOJTABA SAMAREH HASHEMI: According to a resume provided to Embassy by MOFA, Samareh Hashemi was born in 1956 in Kerman and holds a BA degree in Architecture and an MA degree in Urban Engineering from Tehran University. His career has advanced as follows:

- 1980-81 Vice Governor, West Azarbaijan Province
- 1981-85 Vice Governor, Kurdistan Province
- 1985-88 Political Advisor to Governor of Kurdistan Province
- 1986-87 Mayor of Sanandaj, Kurdistan Province
- 1988-89 President, Atisaz Inc., (housing construction company)
- 1989-96 Director General, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- 1997-98 Senior Specialist, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- 1999-2004 Vice President for Education, Iran National Broadcasting, and Dean of Iranian National Broadcasting School
- 2004-05 Advisor to Tehran Mayor Ahmedinejad
- 2005 Senior Advisor to President Ahmedinejad

Between September 2006 and August 2007 he also reportedly held the position of Vice Minister for Political Affairs in the Ministry of Interior. The Japanese indicated that he is extremely close to President Ahmedinejad and characterized him as a "hard-liner."

¶12. (C) HASSAN QASHQAVI: According to a resume provided to Embassy by MOFA, Qashqavi was born in 1957, is married with two children, and holds a BA degree in Law from Shahid Beheshti University. Prior to joining the Ministry of Foreign Affairs he held positions as the General Secretary of the Teachers' Islamic Association, and was the Director of the International Relations Research Department at the Com-Islam Science Research Center. From 1992 to 1996 he was a member of the parliament and served on the Security and Foreign Relations Committees. Between 1996 and 2000, he served as Iran's Ambassador to Kazakhstan. In 2000 he returned to the parliament and served on the Law and Justice Committee. Between 2004 and 2008 he served as Ambassador to Sweden. He assumed his current position as Press Spokesman and Special Assistant to the Minister in July 2008. MOFA contacts told us he spoke English well, and that he conducted at least one of his meetings with Japanese counterparts in

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English. They described his style as straightforward and direct with little patience for chit-chat or levity.
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